

The SECRETS OF MONTE CARLO

The Man with the Claws

"M ESSEURS, faites vos jeux!"

Above the fringe of coin, the rustle of notes, the click of the tiny ivory ball, and the hum of many voices, that monotonous, strident cry which has enticed so many to rule and so few to fortune, rings over in the ears of those who fall beneath the fascination of that most exacting of mistresses, Dame Roulette. In the great gilded salons, where the light of day is excluded by curtains of black and crimson mullin, where the senses are bewildered by an apparent disregard of wealth, and where the atmosphere is heavy with that faint odor of perspiration and perfume, it is the same invitation to play rising above all other sounds year in, year out, Sundays and week days—"Messieurs, faites vos jeux!"

To frequenters of Monte Carlo I require little introduction. They know me, perhaps, as a familiar figure of rather funeral aspect, in frock coat and black tie, strolling aimlessly about, sometimes watching the play at this table or at that, but more often keeping close observation on one or other of the players who, like moths around a candle, are attracted to the tapis-vert by golden expectations. I am an observer by profession, having graduated under Mons. Gordon, chief of the Paris Surete, and afterward served a term as croupier at the roulette tables, whence I rose to be chef de partie, and afterward became appointed to the office I now hold.

The Sink of Europe.

As chief of the surveillance department, my office is no sinecure, for, truth to tell, the Cercle des Etrangers de Monaco is the sink of Europe. An interesting procession of malefactors and criminals of the upper class seems to filter through our salons year by year, in blissful ignorance of the fact that, when they mount the carpeted steps from the Place, they are simply walking into an international police bureau. Little do they dream that if warrants are out for their arrest, it is more than probable that in one of the large albums in my private room behind the bureau, where they present their notorious visiting cards to obtain their carte d'admission, there reposes a well-executed counterfeit representation of themselves, together with a brief and pointed statement of their offense.

In these heavy albums, each devoted to a separate country, I have a truly cosmopolitan collection. Nearly every region on the face of the earth contributes its quota to my gallery of celebrities, for whenever a delinquent is known to have obtained a considerable sum of money by his crime his

pieces; and it was this eagerness to watch heavy risks which one afternoon attracted me to that roulette table which stands at the further end, to the right of the entrance to the trente-et-quarante rooms. It was the height of the Riviera season, a bright, balmy day in early February, a few days before Carnival; the sea outside was turquoise, the sky cloudless, and the gardens were looking their best neglected by those eager crows. A glance around the tables showed me that something unusual was in progress. The croupiers—who are changed each hour—chanced to be all young men, and with such a party the game was always fast and furious. They made it their boast that whenever and brightest; out, as usual, utterly these six came together they played twice as quickly as the "fogies" did.

One Nonchalant Player.

"Messieurs, faites vos jeux!" rose sharply as I approached the chair of the chef de partie, and at the same instant the croupier reversed the red and black wheel, and with a twist of the thumb launched the ivory ball on its way along the circular ledge. The several players threw their silver and gold on the numbers, the dozens, the rouge, the noir, and the impair. Then they waited breathlessly.

Suddenly, just as the ball was losing its impetus, a tall, dark-bearded, rather handsome man, with a pair of black, piercing eyes, which seemed to gleam with an almost unnatural brilliance, thrust his gloved hand into his pocket, and carelessly tossed some notes upon the table without counting them, at the same time exclaiming:

"Premiere douzaine!"

In an instant the croupier spread open, saying:

"Trois mille francs premiere douzaine."

Scarcely had these words been uttered when there arose the inevitable warning:

"Rein ne va plus!"

For a single second there was a dead silence as all eyes watched the tiny ball, while it fell with a rattle and final click into one of the small sockets on the cylinder, and ere it had touched the number the croupier announced in the same sharp voice:

Heavy Play Attracts Crowd.

"Neuf! Rouge, impair et manque!" and with his rake commenced to draw in the losses.

The man who had flung down his notes so carelessly muttered something to himself as if counting, and

took the six thousand francs he had won, handing back the three thousand he had staked, saying:

"Premiere colonne."

Again the invitation to play rose above all other sounds, and loungers attracted from other tables crossed to watch the sensational stakes. I asked one of the blue-coated attendants whether the player had been winning, and the reply was that he had lost only once, and that he had played always with the same stakes—three thousand francs. Then, returning to the table, I stood next him.

The moment the stranger's notes were placed on the small square at the end of the table beneath the number 28, gold and silver were showered upon it by those determined to follow the play of this favorite of Fortune.

The wheel was spun, the ball ejected, and a few moments later, in the breathless tension which followed, arose the words:

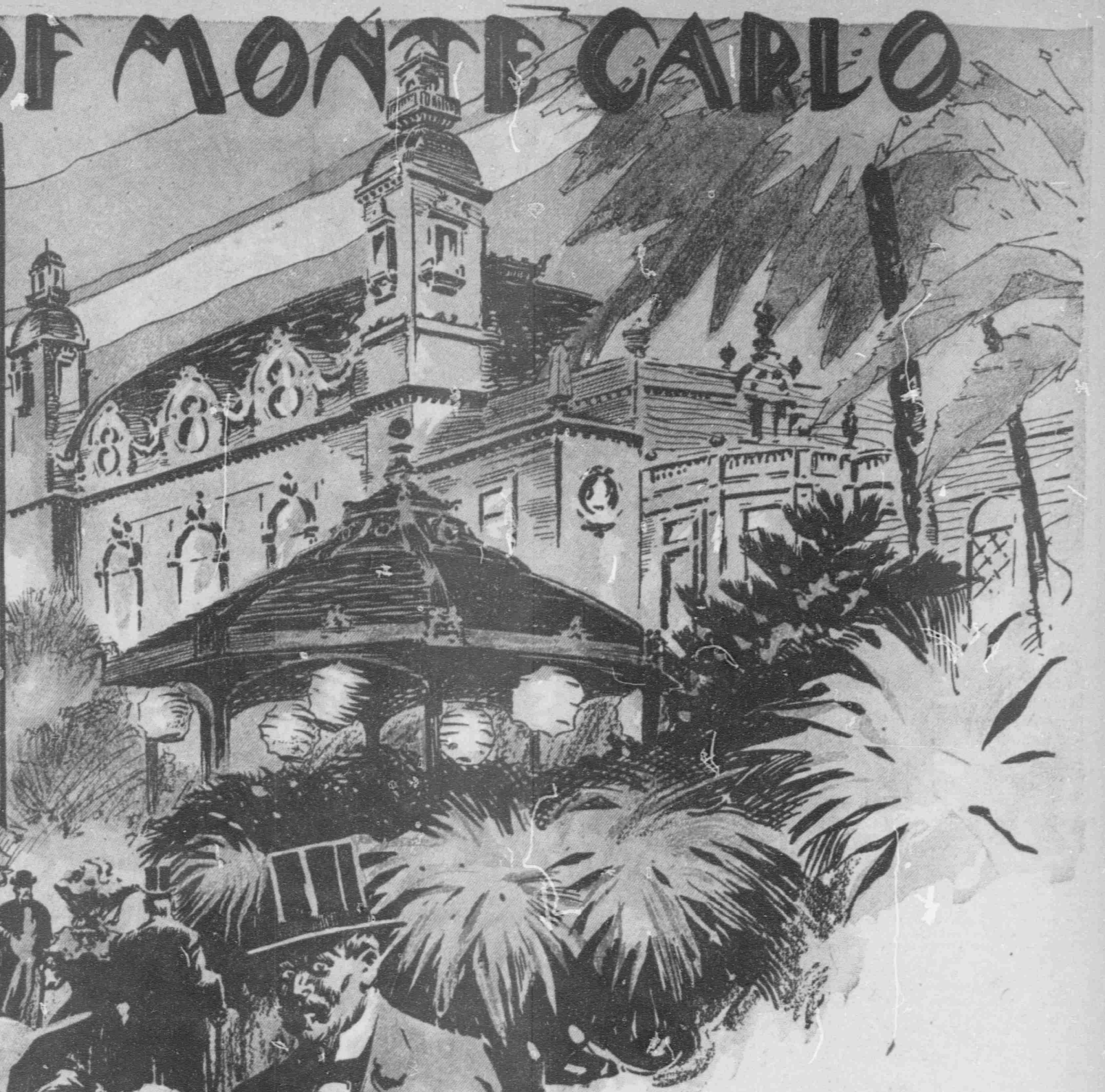
"Dis-quit! Rouge, pair et manque!"

Again the stranger had won. The smaller stakes were paid first, then the croupier handed him six notes, each for a thousand francs. This time he placed all the notes in his pocket, together with the three thousand he had staked, and producing a note for a hundred francs, tossed it on zero.

The chance was too small to suit the majority of the players, and only a couple of five-franc pieces were placed beside it.

"Rein ne va plus!" sounded almost before the stakes could be placed on

Being reminiscences of exciting personal experiences of M. Antoine Martin, Gen'l Director of the surveillance Dept, chronicled by the Chevalier William le Queux



small bar and offered a glass of lemonade. By the manner in which he ordered it I at once knew that he was acquainted with the Casino, for every stranger orders whisky or brandy, in ignorance that no intoxicants are sold. Having swallowed it at a gulp he turned and made his way back into the rooms.

"Well," I asked Grenat, a few moments later, "what's his name?"

"Emile Tessier," was the reply.

At once I entered the bureau of the administration, and from the register discovered that a card of admission had that afternoon been issued to one Emile Tessier, who had given his nationality as French, and his address at the Hotel des Britanniques at Mentone.

Entertains a Suspicion.

Again I went into the gaming rooms, where I found him standing watching one of the center roulette tables. There was nothing extraordinary about him, except the wildness of his eyes, and that, I reflected, might be due either to the intense excitement consequent on winning, or to slight aberration. Yet, somehow, I entertained a suspicion; I felt convinced that some mystery lay behind that man's movements, and therefore continued watching him.

Through the remainder of that afternoon he lounged leisurely about the rooms, sometimes interested in the play, but never risking anything higher than a 5-franc piece, until nearly 7 o'clock, when he obtained his hat and coat and left the Casino. As soon as I saw his intention I also obtained my hat, and took a short cut through the gardens to the railway station. At the top of the steps I overtook an old decrepit man, hunch-backed and shabby, who leaned heavily on his stout stick, and was about to descend. He had been speaking with a man, whose dark figure I saw disappearing in the direction of the Casino. Beneath the light I glanced at the deformed man's face.

It was the successful player! In the darkness of the gardens he had assumed his ragged overcoat, turned his soft felt hat into another shape, and, with an altered expression of heavy care and inexpressible sorrow, had effected a transformation that was little short of marvelous. Indeed, were it not for the fact that I heard him cough, and recognized it as the cough of the man who had won so many thousands at the tables even I should have failed to identify him.

Mystery Proves Deeper.

In that instant I became convinced that my suspicions were not unfounded, and, further, that the mystery was deeper than I had imagined. Naturally he was a tall, handsome, well-built man of gentlemanly bearing and almost military appearance, but his feigned deformity was so complete that the gait could only have been acquired by long practice, while his facial expression was so altered as to render him almost unrecognizable. He was, at any rate, a perfect artist in disguises.

By assuming his hat and overcoat which hid his collar and cravat, he had transformed himself into a member of the tramp fraternity, whom one would suspect of daring to enter the Casino. This extraordinary garb accounted for his third-class ticket. By appointment he had met the man who had disappeared, but their conversation could not have lasted ten seconds.

At the station, instead of remaining on the platform for Mentone, he crossed the line and entered the omnibus train for Nice, while I also mounted into a first-class compartment, determined to see where he really lived, my curiosity being now

thoroughly aroused. That there was some deep purpose in this complete disguise I felt confident, but what it was I could not imagine.

Passed as Landed Proprietor.

When he got out at Nice he had taken off his overcoat, and, carrying it over his arm, walked erect in natural attitude. I followed him down the Avenue de la Gare, across the Place Massena, and on to the Promenade, where he disappeared into the Hotel des Anglais. He had given an incorrect address, and it was strange that a first-class hotel should care to take in a man who wore such shabby trousers. After twenty minutes or so I inquired at the bureau of the hotel, and discovered that the stranger who had thus aroused my curiosity was known as M. Tessier, and that in the register he had inscribed himself as a landed proprietor, living near Bayonne. I took my dinner leisurely at the Helder, afterward returning to Monte Carlo, utterly mystified.

Next day I had many affairs to attend to, and completely forgot the curious incident, until about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when a cough behind me sounded familiar, and there I saw the mysterious stranger standing at the right-hand roulette table just within the entrance. Attired gayly in a suit of light gray, with a pink carnation in his lapel, he was watching the play intently. It was strange how that cough attracted me. I reasoned with myself, but could not account for it. True, I had only first heard it on the previous day, yet it now seemed curiously familiar.

Stranger Plays Again.

From his nervous action I saw that he intended playing; therefore, in order to watch him more intently, I whispered a word to the chef de partie, and took his place on the high chair behind the croupier.

The ball was already in motion when the stranger placed a note for a thousand francs upon a transverse of the last six numbers.

"Trente-deux! Rouge, pair et passe!" cried the croupier, almost next instant.

I watched his face. Although he had won, no smile of satisfaction played about his thin lips. His was a gray, ashen countenance from which all hope and all desire seemed to have fled.

His winnings, 5,000 francs, were pushed toward him, but he twisted the notes together and thrust them into the outside pocket of his jacket with as little care as though they were circulars. His manner had changed from the previous day. He was now pale to the lips, whereas he had been ruddy and healthy looking, and his pallor was heightened by his white silk cravat secured by a gold ring. Again and again he played with unvarying success, until with sudden resolve he transferred all his winnings to an inner pocket, and then tossed a single 5-franc piece upon the center dozen.

Lost Single Silver Coin.

The ball fell upon No. 8. He lost. Then, with some muttered words of discontent, he turned away. It seemed as though, having won thousands of francs, he begrudged the loss of a single coin.

I did not follow him, for the mystery irritated me, and I had already several other important matters on hand.

Nearly a week passed before I saw him again. He was playing at the table where we had first met, and his personal appearance had considerably improved. This time I resolved to speak to him; therefore I went to my room, slipped on a smart tweed coat

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description or his photograph is at once forwarded to me, for the fatal fascination which the roulette wheel exercises upon those guilty of the more serious offenses is truly astonishing. Yet, when once they are recognized, either by myself or my assistants, they have as little chance of escape as they have of winning a zero—or the ami de la maison, as we know it familiarly—on their first throw.

How Police Are Helped.

To discuss the morality of this, the most picturesque spot on the whole littoral, or to hold a brief for or against the tables, is not my intention. To describe it as a hell within a paradise will perhaps suffice. Much has already been written about wild gaming and its dire results—much that is true, but more that is false. Yet, now for the first time, will be shown in these reminiscences the manner in which the administration of the Cercle des Etrangers renders assistance to the police of Europe.

As may readily be imagined, a good many romances in real life pass beneath the notice of one whose days are spent at a spot where drama is continuously being played, and where it is not infrequently varied by tragedy. Truly, ours is a strange world—the world of Monte Carlo.

High play, or a run of luck, always interests me, tired as I am of the stern stakes of single five-franc

The ball gave a little jump, then fell with a sharp click, click, click—click. "Trente-deux!" cried the croupier, loudly, with that roll of the "r" which frequenters of Monte Carlo know so well.

The stranger, with a muttered word, which sounded very much like an oath, turned away, having lost for the first time, but richer by many thousands than half an hour before. Those around the table envied him his luck; and many, mostly of the English tourist class, admired his self-control in leaving immediately after his first loss. If everyone did so, there would be fewer ruined fortunes, and the bank would profit less.

With both hands deep in his pockets, and a disconsolate look on his face—an expression rather as though he had lost heavily than gained—he strolled away into the trente-et-quarante room beyond. Whether it was the curious look of suppressed excitement in his eyes that caused me

to keep his dejected figure in sight I know not, yet by some intuition I felt that about this man—who was certainly not an habitue of the rooms—there was something mysterious. One fact was strange. When he had drawn from his vest pocket the hundred-franc note, he had taken out with it a third-class return railway ticket.

Men as well dressed do not usually travel to Monte Carlo third-class. Again, as I watched him cross the polished floor, I saw that although his coat and vest were well cut, and that he wore a heavy gold Albert, yet his

trousers were frayed at the bottoms, baggy at the knees, and altogether disreputable.

Keeps Detective Guessing.

A dozen times as I strolled backwards and forwards the lengths of the rooms, lounging here and there, I caught his full face and profile. It was that of a man strong-willed, excited beneath a calm exterior, and debating within himself whether he should continue playing.

The face was not the original of any in my collection.

From table to table he strolled, pausing to glance at the play, until he passed out into the great atrium, at that moment filled with the crowd emerging from the concert room.

As I went out by the entrance door I whispered to Genat, the head doorman, pointing him out, and ordering him, if he again entered, to look at his card, and at once send his name to me.

Leisurely the stranger made his way to the end of the hall, entered the

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